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Handbook of Waterfowl Behavior: Tribe Stictonettini (Freckled Duck)

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movements. The species is very aggressive, and males will run or fly toward an opponent and strike it with their wings. Since these birds, like sheldgeese, have bony knobs at the wrist, their wings make very effective weapons. After making an attack, the male will rush back to the female, and the two birds will perform a typical anserine Triumph Ceremony, calling excitedly and moving the head stiffly up and down with neck extended (Fig. 18A, B). As in species of true geese, the voice of the male is higher pitched than that of the female, and both sexes utter piglike grunts of one syllable.

Sexual behavior. Cape Barren geese appear to pair for life and to have strong pair bonds. Copulation apparently always occurs on land, and as evidence that this has been the pattern for a long time, there is no indication of the mutual Head-dipping movements characteristic of all other geese and swans. Rather, the male simply and suddenly begins to walk rapidly around the female, pecking at her back and evidently attempting to push her to the ground (Fig. 18C). The female may walk away or, more typically, abruptly settle to the ground with her head and neck still rather erect. The male then walks around her a few times and—I am describing the three cases I observed—flaps his wings before finally mounting (Fig. 18D). As soon as the male mounts, the female lowers her head and raises her tail. Treading may last up to about ten seconds, during which the male grasps the female's nape (Fig. 18E). Afterward, the male quickly releases the female and dismounts; then the birds call in unison and face one another, shaking their wings and bowing in a manner reminiscent of a Triumph Ceremony (Fig. 18F).

TRIBE STICTONETTINI (FRECKLED DUCK)

Freckled Duck (*Stictonetta naevosa*)

At this point I wish to include the Australian freckled duck, as the only member of a proposed tribe Stictonettini, as I originally suggested in 1960 on a tentative basis. Previously the freckled duck had been generally considered an aberrant dabbling duck with several primitive features, such as a reticulated tarsus, simple tracheal structure (illustrated in Johnsgard, 1961c), and absence of metallic plumage coloration or distinct plumage dimorphism. However, Verheyen (1953) found that some of its skeletal features, such as the palatine structure, the shape of the sternal apophysis, and the number of cervical vertebrae, suggest anserine affinities, and he placed

the species near the whistling ducks. Until recently its downy plumage remained undescribed, but Frith (1964) determined that the downy young lack contrasting patterns and are surprisingly similar to those of the black swan. Therefore I believe that my earlier conclusions regarding this species were justified, and that the freckled duck should be accorded the distinction of constituting a monotypic tribe within the subfamily Anserinae. No hybrids have been recorded involving this species, which occurs widely but infrequently over the southern half of Australia.

General and sexual behavior. During rather extended observations which I made on wild individuals of this species, several previously unreported behavioral features were found. These have been reported more extensively elsewhere (Johnsgard, 1965a), and the following short summary may suffice. Freckled ducks are surface-feeders, generally foraging by filter-feeding with only the bill submerged, but occasionally up-ending. No preflight movements have been seen, but during take-off the birds run some distance over the water in the manner of geese, swans, and whistling ducks. In flight and on the water both sexes are relatively quiet and appear to lack alarm calls. During the breeding season the red base of the male's bill readily distinguishes the sexes, and in addition the male seems to have a slightly darker and more crested head. Females appear to lack Inciting displays, and I observed no social courtship during the three weeks that I studied the birds. Indeed, the only clear-cut display I observed was a mutual neck-stretching and calling, similar in form to the Triumph Ceremonies of swans, although not necessarily occurring in the same context. No obvious pairing of birds was detected, and this mutual display appeared to occur between various individuals, often after a gaping on the part of one of the two. The neck-stretching was accompanied by bill movements and probable calling, but I was never close enough to the birds at such times to ascertain this point. According to H. Frith (pers. comm.), freckled ducks have several trumpeting or flute-like calls that are uttered in various situations. The evident absence of well-defined courtship displays, the occurrence of mutual displays, and the apparent lack of Inciting displays by females tends to substantiate the view that this species is anserine rather than anatine in its relationships. Unfortunately its copulatory behavior is still unknown, and when this and additional behavioral evidence is available a more certain appraisal of the freckled duck's affinities will probably be possible.